

P.I. volunteers lend helping hands to premature babies



Lance Cpl. Shemanski
Cindy Heyward, an employee with Navy Federal Credit Union, adds another Walk America bracelet to a window inside Navy Federal April 2. Navy Federal Credit Union and Naval Hospital Beaufort have collected \$4,000 for the March of Dimes.

LANCE CPL. JUSTIN J. SHEMANSKI
STAFF WRITER

One out of every eight babies is born prematurely in the United States. In an average week more than 100 premature babies are born in South Carolina alone, many of them right here in Beaufort. But with the help of dedicated volunteers and a few donations, one organization in particular and its supporters are trying to put an end to this startling trend.

Navy Federal Credit Union and Naval Hospital Beaufort are teaming up with March of Dimes, a non-profit organization aimed towards researching and preventing premature births, to help promote their cause and to spur more interest in people to volunteer for upcoming events, such as the Walk America fundraiser in Beaufort April 24.

Lieutenant Cmdr. Candace Colston, head of permanent party sick call at the Branch Medical Clinic, and Ann Green Desmori, a medical record technician at the BMC, are both active participants with March of Dimes.

“I knew a little about March of Dimes before I had children of my own . . .but after my first child, who was born prematurely, I was really prompted to get involved,” said Colston.

“It’s one of the top 100 charities in this country so you really can’t go wrong with it. You know they’re making a difference,” she said.

Some premature babies can weigh less than three pounds; the smallest baby had a recorded weight of 285 grams — barely 10 ounces.

“It really doesn’t hit people until they actually see them, actually see how small and fragile a premature baby is,” Colston said.

Both of Colston’s children were born premature. Her youngest son, Brandon, is 2-and-a-half years old and is an ambassador child for March of Dimes this year.

Green, who is also the com

mand representative for the Tri-Command area, said she is active with March of Dimes because of her love for children.

“It’s really a great organization to be a part of,” said Green.

“You know exactly where your donations are going and you know your helping countless children survive.”

Colston and Green are both participating in the Walk America and have participated in many other fundraisers through the BMC.

The money raised goes toward medical

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equipment, hospital fees for caring for premature babies and also to fund classes to educate soon-to-be mothers on ways they can reduce the chances of premature birth.

According to Heather Gardner, an employee for Navy Federal Credit Union and March of Dimes volunteer,

\$4,000 has been raised so far this year between the Naval Hospital and Navy Federal.

“Navy Federal has put on many fundraisers for the March of Dimes,” Gardner said. “Right now we are selling baby bracelets for a \$1 donation which goes toward the Walk America fund.”

There are several different ways to contribute to the March of Dimes. Donations are accepted at Navy Federal and the BMC as well as Naval Hospital Beaufort. Upcoming community events include the Walk America event in April and the Chefs Auction of the Low Country May 2.

Sign-up for the walk will be held at 8:30 a.m. the day of the walk and advanced registration can be made at www.marchofdimes.com/southcarolina.

“We’ve had a great response so far from the Parris Island community, but we could always use more support,” she said. “We’re all in it for the babies.”

More information on making donations or participating in events can be found at www.marchofdimes.com.

18-year-old college grad drops books, picks up rifle

LANCE CPL. JESS LEVENS
HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS

Television shows about child geniuses have captivated American people for decades. “Doogie Howser, M.D.,” “Malcolm in the Middle” and even Cartoon Network’s “Dexter’s Laboratory” have captured hearts of nearly everyone that watches television.

One show, however, may never exist: “Pfc. Billy McCulloch, U.S. Marine.”

McCulloch, 18, earned a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry before he was old enough to vote.

While growing up in Seguin, Texas, McCulloch learned at a rapid pace at his private school. He was so far ahead of his classmates, he was allowed to skip seventh and eighth grades.

“I just seemed to understand,” said McCulloch. “Science came pretty easy.”

At the age of 12, McCulloch began his freshman year of high

school. Later that same year, he took a placement test from Duke University and placed in the top one percentile.

“I did so well on the test, I was allowed to go straight to college,” said McCulloch.

So the boy genius enrolled at Saint Phillip’s College, which is near his home.

“I had a chance to go to Duke, but we couldn’t afford it, and it was too far from home,” said McCulloch.

McCulloch said he fit in with other students despite the age gap.

“At first it was weird having my mom drop me off at college every day,” said McCulloch. “But I realized I wasn’t even old enough to drive, so there was no shame in that. I actually got along with everyone. I guess age doesn’t really matter. We were all science geeks and we had a good time together.”

After his third semester at St. Phillip’s, McCulloch transferred to Texas Lutheran University to finish his degree.

He graduated with his

degree when he was 17, and despite his educational victory, McCulloch had another dream: the Marine Corps.

“I’ve thought about the military for a long time,” said McCulloch.

“I knew it had to be the Marines because they’re the best. It’s common knowledge,” he added. “Every Marine is a rifleman first, but every airman or sailor isn’t. I know I can count on my fellow Marines every time.”

McCulloch looked into becoming an officer but was unable to because he didn’t meet the minimum age requirement of 20 years old. He decided to enlist.

“I wanted to join right away,” said McCulloch. “There was no way I was going to wait around until I was old enough to be an officer.”

McCulloch joined as an infantryman for several reasons.

“I want to go out and see all that I can,” said McCulloch. “If some combat is involved, great. I just want to be out there in the thick of it.”

While preparing for life

in the Corps at recruit training, McCulloch’s knowledge and organizational skills helped him become the platoon scribe. The scribe helps the drill instructors with administrative duties.

“McCulloch is a smart kid,” said Sgt. Kent Sabido, one of McCulloch’s drill instructors. “We give him a task, and we don’t even have to explain it to him. He just figures it out.”

Although Marine Corps recruit training doesn’t call for much chemistry, McCulloch still found ways to put his skill to use.

“One time, there were some spots on the floor and nobody could get them up,” said McCulloch. “I went into the gear locker and mixed some chemicals and it took the spots off.”

McCulloch graduates today in front of his family and peers. “While “Pfc. Billy McCulloch, U.S. Marine” will never grace TV land, the sight of him walking across Shepard Field as a Marine will remain in the minds of those close to him.



Lance Cpl. Jess Levens
Then recruit Billy McCulloch, MCRD San Diego, fills out a platoon fire-watch roster. McCulloch was appointed platoon scribe for his knowledge and organizational skills.

Softball season begins as 4th Bn. defeats Dirty Dental

LANCE CPL. DARBONDA V. HALL
STAFF WRITER

4th Bn. defeated Dirty Dental 22-12 in the Tri-Command intramural softball league at the Depot softball fields Tuesday, giving each team a 1-1 record early in the season, which began Monday.

“The game went well,” said William Pruitt, 4th Bn. coach. “We were really aggressive, that’s our best performance yet. The other team [Dirty Dental] came back strong but we held them.”

Anticipation for the upcoming season has Dirty Dental and 4th Bn. thinking of ways to improve and looking forward to more competition.

“Hopefully we’ll have a winning season this year,” said Pruitt. “Last year we had a lot of heart, but not enough wins.”

But Pruitt said his team has some work to do in order to compete for the league championship.

“Based on Monday’s and Tuesday’s game, we can see that we really need to improve our areas of fielding and defense,” Pruitt said.

“Our best assets are our hit-

ting and base-running,” said Michael Melzer, 4th Bn player.

Christine Hennings, 4th Bn. player, has shown marked improvement since last year’s season, and played an important role in 4th Bn.’s win.

“Hennings was good last year, but she’s gotten a lot better,” said Pruitt.

Gerard Adams, Dirty Dental player, said the game could have gone a lot better, but the team has a positive outlook on the rest of the season.

“Our pitching was down and we could work on our defense,” said Adams. “Even though we still need to work on our hitting, it is our best asset.”

Dirty Dental has a number of payers who are experienced and compete regularly out in town. According to Adams, their presence will make or break Dirty Dentals’ hopes for a championship run.

“We have strong players on our team who play in the city,” Adams said. “We don’t know if they will stay and play the whole season with us, hopefully they will and maybe improve our game a little more.”

Dirty Dentals’ bats were working well, making solid contact and putting balls in play.

However, most of their otherwise productive hits were taken away because they could not hang on to their bats.

“Dirty Dental played really well, if it was not for the player who kept throwing his bat, they would have been much better,” said Pruitt.

“We need to improve little things,” Adams said. “I tend to throw the bat after I swing; I think I need to work on controlling that.”

“This is my first time ever playing a game where there is an umpire,” Adams added smiling.



Lance Cpl. Darbonda V. Hall

Jason Gambrel, 4th Bn. player, hits the ball to the outfield Tuesday evening during a Tri-Command intramural softball game at the Depot softball fields. 4th Bn. defeated Dirty Dental 12-22.